

Epistles

Timeline of writing: 49-95AD

Timeline of events: 1st century of New Testament Church

| The Epistles | |
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| Book | When |
| Galatians | Written after his first missionary journey 49/55 AD |
| 1 Thessalonians 2 Thessalonians | Written during his second missionary journey 51 AD |
| Romans 1 Corinthians 2 Corinthians | Written during his third missionary journey 56-57 AD |
| Ephesians Philippians Colossians Philemon | Written during his first Roman imprisonment 60-62 AD |
| 1 Timothy Titus | Written after his release from prison 63-64 AD |
| 2 Timothy | Written during his second Roman imprisonment 66 AD |
| James | Written within a decade of Christ 40-42 AD |
| Hebrews | Written prior to destruction of Temple Pre 70 AD |
| 1 Peter 2 Peter Jude | Written during Nero's reign and persecution 64 - 67 AD |
| 1, 2, 3 John | John writes after his Gospel 85-95 AD |

Theological significance:

The Epistles are a genre unlike any other in the Bible. Since they are personal letters written to churches or individuals, they are not necessarily narrative, poetry, or prophecy. When the content for these letters is analyzed, it helps prove the veracity of the Gospel accounts. Dozens of Gospel account details are mentioned in these letters, some of which were written prior to the Gospels. Where the Gospels tell the story of Christ, the Epistles help interpret the details.

God's plan revealed through the Epistles:

- God's salvific plan in Christ is systematically laid out by addressing the issues of the church in real time.
- As the first century church applies the teaching of Christ in the real world, several challenges are encountered including persecution, fundamentalism, sin in the church, misunderstandings of grace, misunderstandings of judgement, etc.
- The epistles to the churches explain how the gospel interacts with real world situations.

- The hope of Christ is expressed, in the midst of suffering and persecution.
- A plea to endure suffering while being on the watch for false teaching is given.
- The future hope and destiny for the believer is discussed.

How to Interpret:

- Utilize basic interpretive principles (OICA)
 - Observation, Interpretation, Correlation, Application
- Use these books to develop or sharpen your view of God, man, sin, salvation, etc.
- Recognize the genre, these letters were meant to be read in their entirety
 - There is a form used in nearly all Epistles:
 - Introduction, purpose, main teaching, closing
 - Identify the main purpose and interpret the letter through that lens
- Keep track of the audience, the author, and their relationship
- Remember the chapters are not independent of one another.
- Keep in mind how the passage can apply to you today, you are not just reading history

Analyze and apply a passage:

- Titus 1:1-5; 3:12-14
 - Who are the author and recipient?
 - What is their relationship?
 - What is the occasion/purpose for the letter?
 - How is letter relevant and practical to us now?
 - Who takes the letter to Titus?
 - How does the last command connect with the purpose of the letter?